Assassination Anniversary Marked by 'Definitive' Works

Several big books purport to answer the question, Who killed JFK? Unfortunately, their findings conflict

BY ROBERT DAHLIN

The very same images from Dallas that prove to one man's satisfaction that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing President Kennedy 30 years ago this November lead another to conclude with confidence that a hideous conspiracy destroyed him.

Such starkly conflicting views will collide in bookstores this fall from, among other houses, Random House and Viking. Though wave after wave of books on the assassination have appeared in the years since President Kennedy's death, it is noteworthy that this season brings books from large houses that can afford lavish productions and promotion, which has not been the case with most of the earlier books on the subject.

The Lone Assassin

Random's *Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK* by Gerald L. Posner (Oct., $25, with 16 pages of black-and-white photos) takes what has come to be the more controversial position—the single gunman theory, which holds that Oswald acted alone. This is the official position of the Warren Commission, about which Posner is otherwise critical. To reach his conclusion, which the publisher says answers all lingering questions about the assassination, Posner, a lawyer and author, reexamined the case, conducted dozens of new interviews and viewed computer and laser enhancements of the eyewitness Zapruder film. Posner was unavailable for comment at this writing.

Random House vice-president and executive editor Bob Loomis is reluctant to reveal much of the book's contents: It's too early, he says. "We commissioned this book a couple of years ago," he explains. "At the heart of it is a biography of Lee Harvey Oswald that confronts various conspiracy theories as it goes along. Posner takes up separate episodes as they occur in history—episodes in Oswald's life, in [Jack] Ruby's life—making a chronological scenario in which we see how it all fits together."

Loomis says Posner has followed leads that no one else has, receiving new cooperation from Marina Oswald, the autopsy doctors, Oswald's friends and others. "All the conspiracy theories have undermined the public's belief in the government," Loomis says. "They believe that everybody's in cahoots, that we have murderers in the CIA. That's what has been accepted, and that, to me, is a crime."

Because Posner steadfastly rejects the conspiracy theories in a heavily footnoted argument, Loomis expects the book to arouse controversy. "It's not that the people who have written otherwise are frauds," he contends, "but there is almost a religious fervor out there about conspiracies that is impervious to contrary evidence." A 50,000-copy first printing is planned, with author tour, advertising and an *At Random* feature. First serial rights have been picked up by *U.S. News & World Report*.

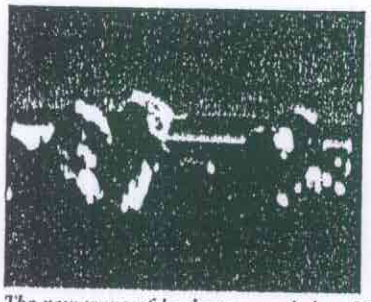
Photos Prove Conspiracy

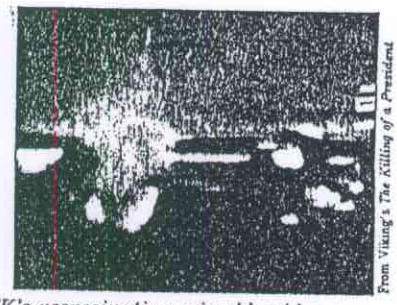
Just as Posner sees the Zapruder film as confirmation of the lone assassin theory, Robert J. Groden sees it as proving exactly the opposite. There was a conspiracy, he asserts. *The Killing of a President: The Complete Photographic Record of the JFK Assassination, the Conspiracy and the Cover-Up* (Viking Studio, Nov., $30) uses computer technology to uncover new details and provides hitherto expurgated transcripts—including that of Jacqueline Kennedy's testimony before the Warren Commission, which is shown to have been originally edited for public consumption. Groden, who has been a student of the assassination since it occurred, was staff photographic consultant to the House Select Committee on Assassinations, as well as technical advisor to Oliver Stone on his film *JFK*. Groden was also unavailable for comment.

Speaking for him, Michael Fragnito, editorial director of Viking Studio Books, says *The Killing of the President* is the only book to be entirely comprehensive in the sheer number and quality of photographic evidence. "There will be more than 650 photographs in color and quadratone," he says, "and a four-color separation of black-and-white photos for maximum clarity. More than 100 of the photographs here have never been published before." Among these are previously suppressed color photos of the autopsy on JFK's body that record bullet entries, and a restoration of the damaged frames of the Zapruder film.

Groden also reportedly uncovered new details in photos already available. "Some of the photographs taken right after the shots were fired show people running toward the grassy knoll [behind], where they saw a puff of smoke," Fragnito says. "Robert makes it very clear that the shot that killed Kennedy came from the front, and if that is true, a conspiracy certainly did occur.

"Robert calls this a howdunit, not a whodunit," continues Fragnito. "He's not one of those wacko assassination buffs. His point is that a conspiracy occurred, but he doesn't claim to know





From Viking's *The Killing of a President*

The new wave of books reexamining JFK's assassination mix old evidence and new technology. Here, "enhanced" frames from the Zapruder film.